

Wildland Fire Not In Our Backyard

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH: WHAT KIND OF FIRE SEASON WILL WE HAVE THIS YEAR?

Fire Outlook – April through August, 2005

Fire potential for much of the West is expected to be above normal due to the following factors:

- The combination of very low snowpacks (some at record low levels) from the Pacific Northwest to the Dakotas and the continuing drought has escalated the risk of wildfires this summer. Spring precipitation will increase the growth of fine fuels but will not affect timber fuels unless the precipitation continues into June.
- A very wet winter in the Southwest has led to a phenomenal growth of grass and brush and will thus increase the wildfire threat in the lower elevations. However, the mountains will see diminished fire potential.
- Alaska is not expected to have another severe fire season like that of last year. Currently, the main threat for high fire potential is in the western Kenai Peninsula due to large areas of bug killed spruce.



Note: This national outlook and some geographic area assessments are currently available at the NICC and GACC websites. The GACC websites can also be accessed through the NICC webpage at: www.nifc.gov/news/pred_services/Main_page.htm

WHAT'S PREDICTED TO HAPPEN IN OUR NECK OF THE WOODS?

According to the National Interagency Fire Center, Predictive Services Group, the National Wildland Fire Outlook for the Great Basin has the

potential of being below to above normal in 2005. The outlook further states, *The Great Basin faces a two-pronged fire potential problem this year. Near-record rain and snow in the south will contribute to a grass fire problem while extremely low precipitation in the drought-stricken north will lead to a timber fire problem. In southern Nevada, southwest Utah and extreme northwest Arizona, high fire potential is forecast at elevations below 6500 feet where grasslands have experienced exceptional fine fuel growth. Most of the*

northern two-thirds of Nevada will have normal fire potential. Significant snowpack and high soil moistures above 6500 feet will keep large dead fuels from being a problem until late summer and only then if the normal monsoonal rains do not occur. The timbered areas of Idaho and Wyoming will see above average fire potential due to meager snowpacks, continued long-term drought and associated vegetation mortality. Large fuels that do not recover from last fall's dry conditions also will contribute to the fire problems in this area.

VOLUNTEER PROJECTS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Boy Scouts' Merit Badge Effort Heightens Wildfire Awareness

The year 2005 marks the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Boy Scouts of America. BLM's Salt Lake Field Office salutes the history of the ideals of the Scout Oath and Law which helps communities both small and large. The Salt Lake Field Office and High Country Estates Community have been thankful recipients of the tradition of service fundamental to scouting.

While developing a community fire plan, the High Country Wildfire Council realized a need to implement an education campaign to help community members prepare for and respond to wildfire. As a result, High Country Estates has distributed brochures, video tape check-outs and other informational materials to residents through a section in their newsletter and on the community website. The council also created three highly visible demonstration areas as exemplary models of defensible space and appropriate building materials.

When Jace Stringham, Eagle Scout candidate for Troop 514, heard of the need to help inform the public outside of the community of wildfire danger he chose to help High Country Estates for an Eagle Scout project. Jace and Troop 514 designed, constructed and installed a large fire danger sign advertising danger levels from low to extreme. The fire danger sign is situated at a location where commuters on their way to enjoy the outdoors through High Country Estates will receive a friendly reminder that wildfire danger is a consideration while recreating.

The fire danger sign project accomplished by Jace Stringham and Troop 514 is an excellent example of coordination between local residents, volunteer groups, state and federal governments working together as a team to help lessen the threat of wildfire to property and lives of Utah communities.

For more information on volunteer opportunities with the Salt Lake Field Office check out www.volunteers.gov

CAMP WILLIAMS HOSTS INAUGURAL FIRE AWARENESS FAIR

In April Camp Williams Readiness Center (Utah National Guard) hosted the inaugural Firewise Community Fair where agencies, families and people concerned about wildfire in Utah County could learn about what to do if a wildfire threatened your home and family. Activities included Blackhawk Helicopter Demonstrations, a Fire Safety Trailer, and Interactive Booths.

The weather on the day of the event was very windy and cold and that might have been a contributing factor to the low turnout. Unfortunately turnout from the public was very

low. However, sponsors representing the American Red Cross, Utah National Guard, Greater Salt Lake Unified Fire Authority, Utah State University, Saratoga Springs Fire Department and the Salt Lake Field Office BLM were happy to learn about the resources available from one another in the form of displays, materials and information.

We hope to make the Community Fire Awareness Fair an annual spring event focusing attention on the upcoming fire season. If you have any ideas on how to increase public participation we would love to hear them.

FREE INTERACTIVE DISPLAY HELPS RESIDENTS LEARN TO PROTECT HOMES FROM WILDFIRES

From Firewise May 2005 Newsletter

Residents of communities at risk for wildfires now have a model to follow when protecting their homes. The Firewise Challenge, created by Firewise Communities, is a small model home that illustrates Firewise practices proven to reduce the risk of damage by wildfires.

Thousands of homes may be at risk from wildfires each year. Research has shown that when homes are adequately prepared before a wildfire starts, their chances for withstanding a wildfire dramatically increase.

The interactive Firewise Challenge allows users to construct the model home using recommended Firewise practices throughout the process. Users can add a defensible space to the model, create firebreaks, and reduce dry fuels, all recommended practices for protecting the home from wildfire.

“The Firewise Challenge is a great resource that can be used in a variety of ways,” said Jim Smalley, manager of the national Firewise Communities program. “Families can use the display to learn what precautions they should take to protect their homes from wildfires. Also, the Firewise Challenge is a great companion to *Wildfires: Beware and Prepare* for educators to use in the classroom.”

The Firewise Challenge can also be used either as a static display to illustrate what a Firewise house should look like, or as an interactive display so people can take an active part in designing, building and maintaining a Firewise home.

To order your free Firewise Challenge, visit the Online Firewise Catalog at www.firewise.org. Quantities are limited to one per order. Users will be asked to pay a portion of shipping expenses, or provide a FedEx account number.

For More Information:

Contact your County Fire Warden

Tooele County Roice Arnold, 435-241-0027

Utah County Del Jay, County Fire Warden, 801-343-4137

Rich County Dan Ames, 435-757-4974

Box Elder County Greg Martz, Box Elder County Fire Warden, 435-734-3831

or

BLM Teresa Rigby and/or Erin Darboven, Fire Education and Mitigation Staff, 801-977-4344

or

www.firewise.org, www.firesafecouncil.org, www.fema.gov, www.fireplan.gov,
www.utahfireinfo.gov